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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

EUGENE O'NEILL AND HIS WORLD

Submitted by

Edna Nona Quick

(B.S.Ed., Boston University, 1928)

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EUGENE O'NEILL AND HIS WORLD

Introduction.

1. Preliminary Statement of the Problem.

The object of this investigation is to find the unique individuality of Eugene O'Neill and to trace his world as it is reflected in his plays. The former includes his reaction to environment; his literary heritage; and the unique characteristics in his plays as illuminations of the author. The latter comprises a synoptic view of the meaning of life, as he sees it, with regard to the individual, society, nature, and their relations.

This study includes no exposition of the technique of the plays, except in so far as that technique may throw light on the problem as we have stated it.

2. The Method of Approach.

Our method of approach will be analytical and synoptic. The analytical method is necessary because we have a special objective in that it is to single out relevant material; a synoptic view will then gather these materials into a comprehensive interpretation of Eugene O'Neill and his world.

3. Materials.

This involves a study of the available literature on O'Neill, and a study of all his writings which are now procurable.

4. Work Done on This Subject.

An abundance of writing has been done on Eugene O'Neill, but most of it is of a fragmentary nature. The early years of his life have such close bearing on his work and they read so like fiction that they have been counted over and over again.

In like manner, the sensational nature of his work has provoked much expression, both pro and con. The fact that O'Neill can draw attention from European critics makes him the center of an "adulation chorus". Much of this work is not serious because it is not critical.

There are some critics, however, who have given their attention to the plays in a more serious manner. Joseph T. Shipley writes a booklet, The Art of Eugene O'Neill, which is such an attempt. Thomas H. Dickinson in Playwrights of the New American Theater interprets and sums up the characteristics of O'Neill in an illuminating manner. Eugene O'Neill by Barrett H. Clark, is the outstanding work of fact with regard to the life. This book also discusses each of the published plays down to and including those of 1926. Isaac Goldberg presents a group of O'Neill letters written to Nathan, in his book, The Theater of George Jean Nathan. These letters are helpful to the student of O'Neill.

There are numerous good magazine articles. From these we may mention a few.

Baker, G.P., "O'Neill's First Decade",
Yale Review, 15 (1926), pp.789-
792

- Eaton, W.P, "Eugene O'Neill As a Dramatist",
Theater Arts Magazine, 4 (1920),
pp. 286-289
- Eaton, W.P, "American Drama Flowers", World's Work,
53 (1926), pp. 105-108
- Hofmannsthal, H, "Eugene O'Neill", Freeman, 7 (1923),
pp. 39-41
- Katzin, W, "The Great God O'Neill", Bookman, 68
(1928), pp. 61-66
- Quinn, A.H, "Eugene O'Neill, Poet and Mystic",
Scribner's Magazine , 80 (1926),
pp. 368-372
- Sergeant, E.S, "O'Neill: the Man with a Mask",
New Republic , 50 (1927), pp. 91-95
- Young, Stark, "An Estimate of Eugene O'Neill",
New Republic, 32(1922), pp. 307-308

Chapter I

EUGENE O'NEILL, THE MAN AND HIS WORK

A. The Man.

Biographical Sketch.

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill was born on the sixteenth day of October, 1888, in Times Square, New York, in what is now the Hotel Cadillac. His father and mother were both Celts, and both characteristically gifted: the father was James O'Neill, America's beloved actor of The Count of Monte Cristo; the mother, who had spent her girlhood in a convent, was beautiful, pious, and an exceptionally fine pianist.¹

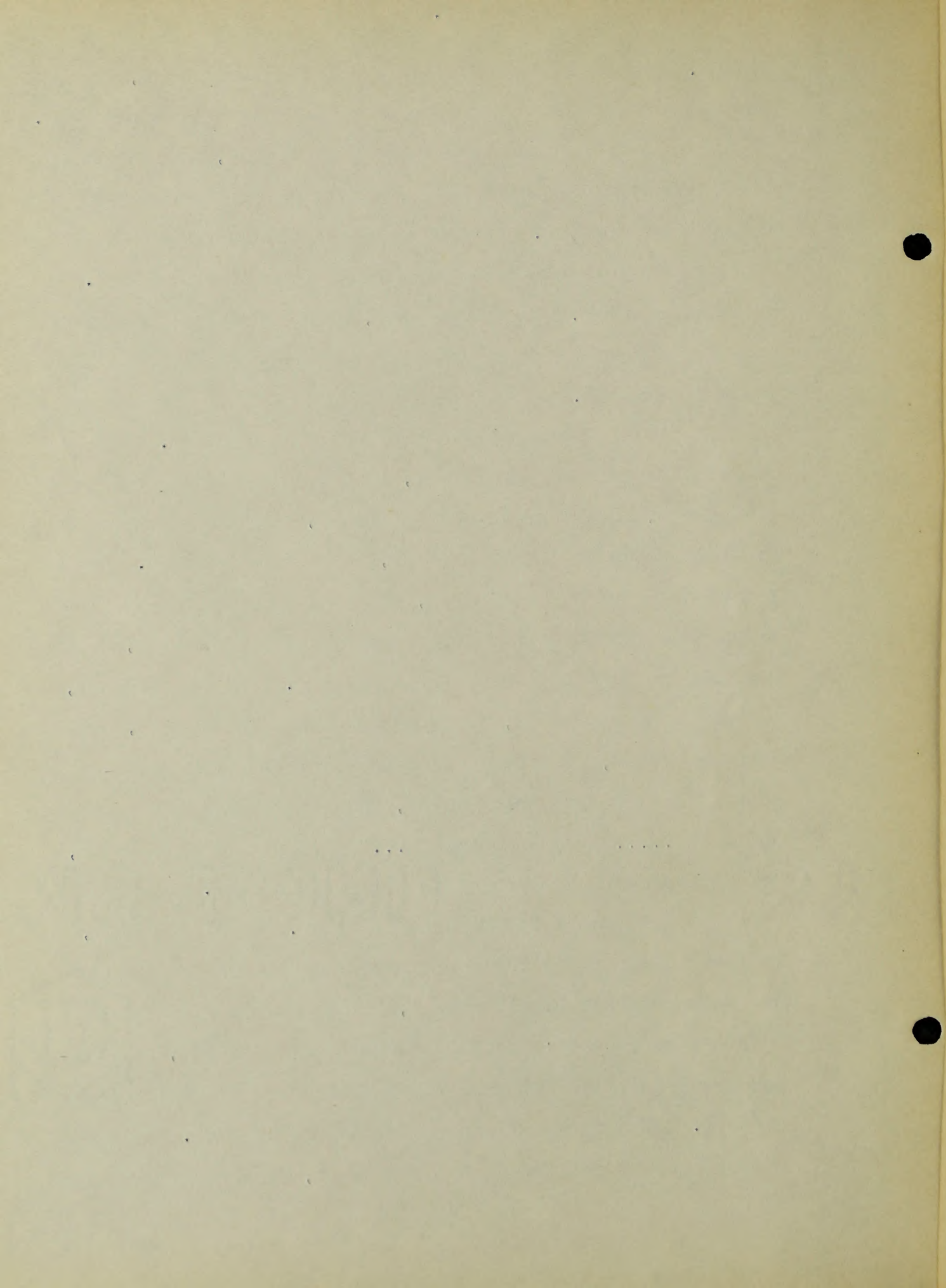
Though the boy was named for the great Gladstone, he was destined to know wanderings better than a home. His first seven years were spent with his parents as they went on theatrical tours. An English nurse seems to have supplied the first stimulus for his vivid imagination,² but he liked his mother's music.³ At seven he was sent to a Catholic boarding school, where separation from "the lovely distant mother" and the heroic, "strutting actor-father", occasioned "outbursts⁴ of hysterical loneliness." At the end of six years, after a series of these schools, he entered Betts Academy at Stamford. Upon his graduation in 1906 he enrolled at Princeton, where he remained for about one year. The rebel was already beginning to show himself in O'Neill, for his suspension from Princeton came for "shying a brick through President Wilson's

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window." He could have gone back the following year, but an academic career he put away because he was not interested.

Mention is made of his brother, who ten years older and highly sophisticated, had great influence upon Eugene at this time. "Jim symbolized hard-boiled masculinity and stimulated his revolt against 'the old man'. Jim was an actor. Jim loved wine, woman and song; he had easy social graces which a prickly youngster envied and tried to emulate."⁶

Another influence was that of books. "He read not once but every summer, in his father's house in New London, the fifty volumes of Dumas, the complete works of Victor Hugo and Charles Lever, the Irish romancer. To the pleasure of James O'Neill, who used to harp on the glorious deeds of Shane the Proud and the other O'Neills, he was also an avid reader of Irish history." He loved Scott, was a "fiend on Byron", "absorbed Dickens and Kipling, and somewhat later, Jack London and Conrad"; and when eighteen "spurred by Benjamin Tucker, the famous philosophical anarchist.....he read Nietzsche..."⁷ In addition to these,⁸ he had read Marx and Kropotkin while in college.

He left Princeton in 1907. From this time, in the records there follow in quick succession the tokens of those cravings of his spirit, which characterize his life even to the present: revolt against the "machines, contrivances and policies" of a world to which he would not suit himself.⁹ The far-away places called and he went. Had O'Neill been less sincere in his revolt, his father's wealth



might have induced him to settle down. These years were not easy ones. He knew danger, want and struggle.¹⁰ From 1907 to 1912 he was literally a waster and a wanderer. A secretaryship in a New York mail order house proved a failure and he was glad soon to be relieved of the job. In 1909 his first marriage came with one, Kathleen Jenkins, of New York. This same year he made a gold-prospecting trip to Honduras. Returning home in 1910, he traveled for three months from Boston to St. Louis as assistant manager of the White Sister Company in which his father was playing with Viola Allen.¹¹ About this time he was reading Jack London, Kipling, and Conrad, and now the Nigger Of The Narcissus lured him to ship on a Norwegian barque for South America. Here he held "stop-gap" jobs with the Westinghouse Company and the Singer Company in Buenos Aires, and with Swift in La Plata. From each of these he either¹² walked out in disgust or was discharged.

The stories of his "life on the beach" in Buenos Aires, when he drank, lived with outcasts, and worked only when he could not subsist without it, have been greatly exploited by his admirers.¹³

To sea again, O'Neill tended mules on a voyage to South America and return, and then, completely destitute, he returned to New York as ordinary seaman on a British tramp steamer. Here he lived for months on free lunches provided with drinks at a waterside dive called "Jimmy the Priest's". In the daytime he bummed with the

men about the waterfront, and at night slept in airless bunks or with his head on a table.¹⁴ He says the reality of all this was "a thousand times more incredible and imaginative"¹⁵ than the stupid inventions of his early admirers.

There were occasional jobs on small boats and one voyage as able seaman to Southampton and return. Then one day he found himself aboard a through train with a ticket for New Orleans.¹⁶ There had been a party over some lucky winnings and this was the result. His father, who was playing in New Orleans, was visited with the request for a return ticket to New York. The boy was a puzzle to his father. O'Neill says he often thought he was "just crazy".¹⁷ The ticket not forthcoming, he was obliged to act a small part in his father's company,¹⁸ which privilege he cared little about.

At the end of the season, he began reporting for The New London Telegraph, of which Fred P. Latimer was editor. Here he was "happy, interested in his work, and fortunate in his personal associations".¹⁹ Walter Prichard Eaton says of O'Neill of this time that he was a dark-eyed, sensitive boy of twenty-two[#], reputed wild, by nature a social rebel and by way of life made more so;²⁰ and speaking of Latimer's contact with him, he (Latimer) "disagreed with all Eugene's views of life, but was willing to argue them, and more important still, saw that beneath them was a mind at work."²¹ Clark says that Latimer liked him and believed in him, and, quoting O'Neill-- "He's the first one

who really thought I had something to say, and believed I
 could say it." ²² He "established the first connection
 between a young groping soul and some tangible outlet for
 its natural interest..." ²³

O'Neill worked for the New London Telegraph
 about six months. Then at the close of that year (1912) his
 health broke down. The years of undisciplined living now
 had to be taken into account. In the winter and spring of
 1912-13, confined to a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients
 at Gaylord Farm at Wallingford, Connecticut, for the first
 time he was forced to take a more inclusive view of himself.
 He began "to sound his own depths", and such was his nature
 that he "turned straight inward and bluntly asked himself
 where he was going." ²⁴

His reflections were fruitful. He began to
 want to give expression to what he had seen of life and to
 what he thought about life. He had grown up with the theater
 and it was to this form he turned.

But to really accomplish something worthwhile
 in drama would require health, and health would require
 discipline. O'Neill's case of tuberculosis was not an
 advanced one but he was warned that he must go carefully
 if he wished to be well. And now with a definite goal
 ahead he began to impose order upon himself. For over a
 year after he left the sanatorium, he rested, read, exercised,
 and wrote. Even in the winter he went swimming. "In
 fifteen or sixteen months' time he wrote eleven one-act

plays, two long ones, and some verses."²⁵ When he read he read voraciously, and mostly drama. It was not with half a heart that O'Neill went into his new life. The reason was that he considered it of some account. This attitude has continued with him to the present time. Thus the old restlessness passed into the new form, that of the taut spirit of a creative artist.

We have mentioned the fact of his reading of this period. He says, "I read about everything I could lay hands on: the Greeks, the Elizabethans--practically all the classics--and of course all the moderns. Ibsen and Strindberg, especially Strindberg."²⁶

In 1914 he entered the famous "47 Workshop" play-writing class of Baker at Harvard. But because of temperament, and because he was older in experience than the other men in the class, he was impatient here. The plays he wrote did not amount to much, except for Bound East For Cardiff, and Baker did not consider this a play at all.²⁷ However, he did profit through personal contact²⁸ with Baker, who encouraged him to go ahead.

1915-16 saw O'Neill in Greenwich Village, New York, where he spent the winter "among the Radicals of the Labor movement, I.W.W.'s and the Anarchist group, as well as among the true native villagers, the negro and Italian inhabitants of the quarter."²⁹

In the early summer of 1916 he showed the Provincetown Players in the village his Bound East For

Cardiff, and they produced it. O'Neill says, "I owe a tremendous lot to the Players--they encouraged me to write, and produced all my early and many of my later plays. But I can't honestly say I would not have gone on writing plays if it hadn't been for them. I had already gone too far ever to quit."³⁰

By 1918 Thirst and Other One-Act Plays, Before Breakfast, Bound East For Cardiff, In The Zone, The Long Voyage Home, Ile, and The Moon of the Caribbees had secured publication. Then for Beyond The Horizon, in 1920, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Since this time there has been continuous production and his position as "our leading dramatist" has not been questioned.

In his description of Stephen Murray in The Straw, O'Neill has given us a glimpse of himself: "a tall, slender, rather unusual looking fellow with a pale face, sunken under high cheek bones, lined about the eyes and mouth, jaded and worn for one still so young. His intelligent, large hazel eyes have a tired, dispirited expression in repose, but can quicken instantly with a concealment mechanism of mocking, careless humor whenever his inner privacy is threatened. His large mouth aids this process of protection by a quick change from its set apathy to a cheerful grin of cynical good nature. He gives off the idea of being somehow dissatisfied with himself but not yet embittered enough by it to take it out on others. His manner, as revealed by his speech--nervous,

inquisitive, alert--seems more an acquired quality than any part of his real nature. He stoops a trifle, giving a slightly round-shouldered appearance...He is staring into the fire, dreaming, an open book lying unheeded on the arm of his chair."

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From this picture of the O'Neill of the beginning it is easy to go to the man of more mature years, with his "mask of arrogant disdain. The tortured dreamer's eyes, the tossed black head, with its streaks of white, the scowling, thunderous face, glimpsed at some formal dress rehearsal, escaping praise", and to note that though he appears forbidding he is "sorry and uneasy in his aloofness." There may be a flash of a smile of doubting trust but he is always hiding, always revealing--strange duality of being in this Irish American mystic.

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Barrett Clark tells a simple little story about O'Neill and a feeble-minded boy. O'Neill was very gentle with the child, who had formed a deep affection for him. One day the two were sitting on the beach at Provincetown. What was beyond the Point ? the boy wanted to know, and what beyond the sea, and what beyond Europe ? And the older man said, "the horizon", and of course the boy asked what was beyond the horizon. As Clark says, this is like his utter simplicity, a simplicity difficult for his friends to understand.

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We have mentioned O'Neill's marriage to Kathleen Jenkins in 1909. A year after this contract,

his son, Eugene, was born. But the marriage was a failure and in 1912 was annulled. In 1918 his second marriage occurred, with Agnes Boulton. A boy and a girl were born to them. Clark says, "To Mrs. O'Neill the dramatist owes a great deal more than can be properly set down in these pages."³⁴ For ten years they spent their time in Connecticut, Bermuda, and New York. Then in 1928 O'Neill went to the Orient. Trouble was brewing between the two. He has not yet returned from his trip abroad.

He is a member of The American Institute of Arts and Science and in 1926 Yale University conferred upon him the degree of doctor of letters.

B. His Work.

We are primarily concerned with the unique individuality of O'Neill and with his interpretations of life, not with the means (in the technical sense) he uses, but a summary of the characteristics with regard to form and content may throw some light on the man and his world.

1. Form.

From a study of O'Neill's writings in his plays and about them, it is easy to conclude that his primary interest is in content, not in form. He was born in the theater and was so familiar with it and its traditions, that technique seemed to be almost intuitive with him. Though it was the traditional theater from which he got his native ability, he hated it, and felt it utterly

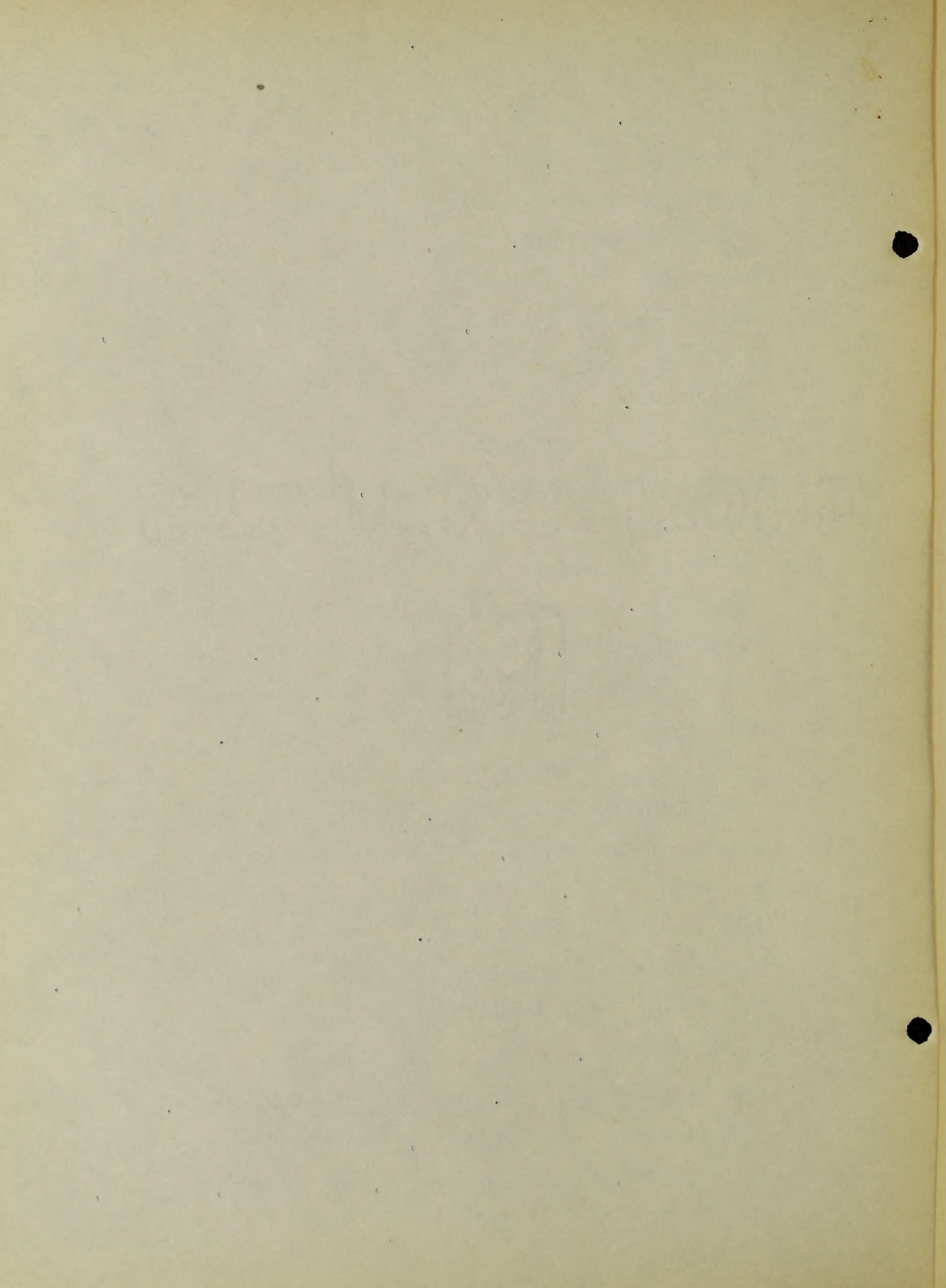
inadequate. By this time the revolt against realism was on in Europe, and in Strindberg and others he found searchers after new means to convey the multifariousness of modern life. Also, we may add that his revolt was contemporary with a period of experimentation going on in the American theater, and by the time he was ready, there were "little keys" prepared for him on which he could play.

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O'Neill's own entire career came to be one of innovation and adaptation, not for the sake of novelty, but that he might discover the exact means for articulating what he saw of the nature of man and his activities. Once he conceives his play from the standpoint of content, form follows to suit it. The changes and developments of his dramatic art, as regards the formal aspect, may be divided into two parts.

The first period (1913-1920) was predominantly of the one-act form. The one-act is the simplest of all dramatic forms, since it is composed of a single aspect of action. O'Neill wrote twenty-six in this form, twelve of which he destroyed. Thus we see that he was consciously perfecting his skill in the simpler form first. The second period (1920-1929) has been one of continued experimentation. He has realized that the day for the playwright has arrived. The actor is his servant. James O'Neill was his own authority, as actor of the Count of Monte Cristo, but the son writes, and players, managers,

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directors, stage, are all subject to his ideas.

Also, though the modern law of "one-act; one scene, with each act a unit with a beginning, middle, and end",³⁷ O'Neill does not obey. He believes that the end is all; form has nothing predetermined about it.³⁸ He may have anywhere from two to nine acts. A play of two acts rarely fills an evening, but he wrote Diff'rent and All God's Chillun in two acts each, since he saw his subject in two parts, and he believed that three acts would make the material too thin. The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape are in eight scenes each. These plays are made up of episodes, each episode needing to follow the preceeding in quick succession to get a crescendo of feeling. His critics agree that this form is successful. In Strange Interlude he contemplated a novel-play. He really produced a play-novel for the drama breaks down at the end of the fifth act. From this point it continues in the less dramatic form to the end of nine acts.

Name of Play	: Act	: Part	: Scene	: Year	: Remark
Wife for Life	: 1	:	:	: 1913	: Destroyed
The Web	: 1	:	:	: "	: Repudiated now by O.
Thirst	: 1	:	:	: "	: " " " "
Recklessness	: 1	:	:	: 1914	: " " " "
Warning	: 1	:	:	: "	: " " " "
Fog	: 1	:	:	: "	: " " " "
Bread and Butter	: 4	:	:	: "	: Destroyed
Servitude	: 3	:	:	: "	: " "
Bound East for Cardiff	: 1	:	:	: "	:
Abortion	: 1	:	:	: "	:
A Knock at the Door	: 1	:	:	: 1915	: Destroyed

Name of Play	: Act	: Part	: Scene	: Year	: Remark
The Snipper	: 1	:	:	: 1915	: Destroyed
The Personal Equation	: 4	:	:	: "	: "
Belshazzer	:	:	:	: "	: "
Before Breakfast	: 1	:	:	: 1916	:
The Movie Man	: 1	:	:	: "	: Destroyed
Now I Ask You	: 3	:	:	: "	: "
Atrocity	: 1	:	:	: "	: "
Ile	: 1	:	:	: "	:
In the Zone	: 1	:	:	: "	:
The Long Voyage Home	: 1	:	:	: "	:
The Moon in the Caribbees	: 1	:	:	: "	:
The G. A. M.	: 1	:	:	: "	: Destroyed
Till We Meet	: 1	:	:	: 1918	: "
The Rope	: 1	:	:	: "	: "
Beyond the Horizon	: 3	:	: 6	: "	: Pulitzer Prize 1920
The Dreamy Kid	: 1	:	:	: "	:
Shell-Shock	: 1	:	:	: "	: Destroyed
Where the Cross is Made	: 1	:	:	: "	:
The Straw	: 3	:	: 5	: "	:
Honor Among the Bradleys	: 1	:	:	: 1919	: Destroyed
Chris	: 3	:	: 6	: "	: "
The Trumpet	: 1	:	:	: "	: "
Exorcism	: 1	:	:	: "	: "
Gold	: 4	:	:	: 1920	:
Anna Christie	: 4	:	:	: "	: Pulitzer Prize 1921
The Emperor Jones	:	:	: 8	: "	:
Diff'rent	: 2	:	:	: "	:
The First Man	: 4	:	:	: 1921	:
The Hairy Ape	:	:	: 8	: "	:
The Fountain	:	: 3	: 11	: "	:
Welded	: 3	:	: 4	: 1923	:
All God's Chillun: Got Wings	: 2	:	: 7	: "	:
Desire under the Elms	:	: 3	: 12	: 1924	:
Marco Millions	: 3	:	: 11	: "	: (Prologue Epilogue)
The Great God Brown	: 4	:	: 11	: 1925	: " "
Lazarus Laughed	: 4	:	: 8	: 1925-6	:
Strange Interlude	: 9	: 2	:	: 1928	:
Dynamo	: 3	:	:	: 1928-9	: First of a Trilogy

As to the language O'Neill uses, one is struck by his fondness for Anglo-Saxon words. In addition he is charged with resorting to violent language at times to get hard effects. This is true but it is also true that his characters speak according to their various natures. O'Neill is often a poet. Many of his lines are filled with music and beauty. He has been called a literary dramatist.

2. Content

The scenes of O'Neill's plays may be realistic but the realism is merely a fictitious thing---"it is intended as a symbol of an inward state"³⁹in a sense he never in realism sought anything but symbol, never in the concrete failed to shadow man, the eternal protagonist in the grip of natural forces greater than himself."⁴⁰ It is an interaction or a clash of forces, expressed in symbols which signify the meaning of the conflict. The realists may deny the ultimate separation of the symbols and meanings, or expressions and inward states; they cannot deny the primacy of the forces or states of the inner life. For this reason and in order to interpret O'Neill truly, we shall classify the content of his work according to this inward state expressed in his plays.

The first of the better plays have romantic titles. Some are romantic plays, but most of his early writings, though there is a romantic thread running through nearly all, he treated so realistically that they must be classed as pieces of realism. His own most real experience had had for

its background the far-off places and much of his time was spent on a boat. His experience afforded him contact with men who, though possessed of common human hungers, had become through their weaknesses and lusts, disillusioned cynics, such as the Donkey man in The Moon of the Caribbees, or sentimentalist^s, like Yank in the same play. These indicate the influence of Marx and Kropotkin, the reading of whom had led him to place the blame for these derelicts on civilization.

Through strong character, a person gains his individuality, but through it he may also lose his balance, "the golden mean". O'Neill portrays intensified character in single dominant motives for he believes that "It is only when we are under strain that we are truly ourselves. When the string hangs loose custom and habit rule. When the string is tightened character is shredded into atavistic strains; forgotten memories sing in the sound,"⁴¹ In moments of great stress life copies melo-⁴²drama. Thus we have a large number of plays by O'Neill in which some overpowering motive is at work in at least one character. This strong desire becomes an obsession. It masters the whole individual, even to the destruction of the man.

Early in his work, he began to see this tendency in man. In Ile, a whaling master is possessed with the idea of coming home with his vessel filled with oil. Two years are spent in seas of ice. The wife can

no longer endure the barrenness of the life. She finally succeeds in getting a promise from her husband to sail homeward, but almost immediately he is told that the ice is breaking. Forgetting his promise, he orders the ship to go forward for oil. The wife goes insane. This invincible will of the individual, rational or irrational, forecasts the clash of forces---the fundamental element of drama, and many of O'Neill's plays are built upon this tendency in man.

O'Neill is interested in psychological studies. Among these we may mention his studies of fear in Emperor Jones, in Lazarus Laughed, in Dreamy Kid, and All God's Chillun. Fear in the form of superstition is also used in Gold, and Anna Christie. With regard to temperament and moods, O'Neill, like other dramatists finds the psychology of sex a good laboratory. However, he has not carried his interest to the extremes of Strindberg. Welded, First Man, Diff'rent, Desire, Strange Interlude, are definite attempts to show the clash between the sexes. He shows in each of these the tendency to live temperamentally; to throw off the joke of human law and to follow mood. O'Neill has never been so successful in psychology studies^{of} as in his emotional plays.

He is interested in revealing "ingrained inclinations toward life." This gives him an interest in races. Here he has opportunity to study characters under under great emotional strain. Dreamy Kid, All God's Chillun

and Emperor Jones show both the strength and the weakness of the negro. In the Fountain O'Neill brings out his admiration for the stoical, contemplative man in the character of Nano, the Indian, and again for the philosophical Oriental, in Kulai Khan, and his Chinese court philosopher, in Marco Millions.

In spite of the voluntarism in O'Neill, he is not ignorant of the "clutch of circumstances." In Moon, he is, or seems to be, conscious of the "forces, the subtlest influences which work compellingly on men and women who believe themselves free agents." ⁴³ Lazarus Laughed, and Dynamo, therefore, come as attempts to deal with religion in these modern days. This interest challenges his philosophy of life as a whole, problems such as time, purpose, memory, progress, and conservation of values. To detect O'Neill's position in these questions, we are led to consider his work, the total attitude toward life in addition to the form and content of his plays.

3. His philosophy.

By "philosophy" here, we mean O'Neill's "vision", "modes of feeling the whole push, and seeing the whole drift of life, forced on one by one's total character and experience, and on the whole preferred." ⁴⁴ A man's vision is the great fact about him; it is the expression of his intimate character. It is in place, then to reflect briefly on O'Neill's "vision", the culmination of his temperament and experience as it is expressed in his art.

O'Neill is one day called sordid realist; another grim primitive naturalist, lying moral romanticist, immoral violent expressionist.⁴⁵ He is also called "a mystic and a poet."⁴⁶ After a synoptic study of O'Neill, we find that the views indicated here are not at such variance as would appear. Before we label him, let us define a few of the terms and their implications, whereby we may clearly and justly make our classification.

Lalande characterizes romanticism "by the defiance and depreciation of esthetic and logical rules, by the apology for passion, intuition, liberty, spontaneity, and by the importance for the idea attached to life and infinity."⁴⁷ Baldwin defines the romantic as making feeling and passion primary", preferring "the vague, mystical, and obscure to the clear and distinct, and it is opposed to any laws, social, political, or moral..."⁴⁸ The dominant note is to emphasize the inner and the spontaneous over against the outer and ruled or conventionalized.

Realism, on the other hand, signifies the art which never idealizes the real and makes "better than nature", but^{is} solely to articulate the effective essentials of character of what they are. What is given in daily life is true and real. This is closely related to naturalism in that the artist aims to reproduce the actual instead of idealizing the situation. But naturalism puts more emphasis upon the continuity of nature and man and man and animal and upon the specific values of life. Naturalism calls for

respect for the instinct, the individual spontaneity, incarnation of ideal in nature, and for democracy by lowering the standard of man.

Expressionism, like the term impressionism, is a "neat term for a passing mode". Cheney, quoting Bahr, says, in art it is one "who must paint, who cannot paint in any other way than he does paint, and who is prepared to hang for his way of painting."⁴⁹ The emphasis here is on the ex-pression according to personal temperament. This sounds strangely like Rousseau. Cheney considers, "Expressionism to be that movement in art which transfers the emphasis from technical display and imitated surfaces of nature to creative form; from descriptive and representative truth to intensified emotional expressiveness; from objective to subjective and abstract formal qualities."⁵¹ He further points out that expressionism distorts ruthlessly the outward aspects of nature, telescoping time, intensifying the emotional "look" of a place to the exclusion of all material detail, may caricature people; uses words with a new effectiveness, singly for immediate emotional reaction without regard to grammatical arrangement----and at the other extreme they pile up words and speeches into avalanches of emotion; and all is swift, abrupt, Whimansque.^t They burst bounds of old philosophies, old divisions of realism, romantic symbolism, piling them in if the mixing helps.⁵¹ Thus, we do not wonder any longer at O'Neill's statement: "The old 'naturalism' or 'realism,' if you prefer, (I would to

God some genius were gigantic enough to define clearly the separateness of these terms once and for all!) no longer applies."⁵²

These short excursions into the realm of types will aid us in our attempts in locating O'Neill's position. This is a difficult task for four reasons; namely, first, no artist or philosopher, who is coherent at all, can be confined to one "system" or type; second, critics on O'Neill have defined the terms just mentioned, quite variously; third, within one period of time O'Neill writes the naturalistic play, Diff'rent, and the expressionistic type, Emperor Jones, and fourth, he mixes realism and symbolism, romantic ideals and naturalistic principles in a single play. Thus it is impossible to make any rigid classification. We merely suggest the predominant note.

Type	: Play	: Predominant Note
Realistic	: Thirst	:
	: The Web	: The aim in these plays is to
	: Recklessness	: produce the actual. The "fact-
	: Warnings	: ual" and the "actual" are real.
	: Before Breakfast	: The idealization of the situa-
	: Ile	: tion is objectified.
	: Moon of the	: "Grotesque" in some cases.
	: Caribbees	:
Naturalistic	: The Rope	: A genetic exhibition of the
	: Diff'rent	: character: a psychological
	: Desire Under the	: study of perverse ideas; a stu-
	: Elms	: dy of biological determinism
	: Welded	: in a way--Freudian.
	: Dreamy Kid	: Paradox of courage and fear in
	:	: the negro.

Type	: Play	: Predominant Note
Expressionistic:	Fog	: A touch of supernaturalism.
and symbolistic:	Anna Christie	:
	: Emperor Jones	: From crisis to crisis of emo-
	:	: tion.
	: Great God Brown:	Promotion of creative experience
	: The Hairy Ape	: Struggle to think--to "belong".
	: The First Man	: Final victory through mastery of
	: Lazarus Laughed:	self. Will to break fear. (L.L.)
	: All God's Chillun	The power of love.
	: Strange Inter-	: Craving for self-expression.
	: lude	:
	: Beyond the	: Desire for ideal beauty.
	: Horizon	:
	: Marco Millions	: Ideals of two civilizations.
	: Dynamo	Struggle of old and new orders.
Romantic	: Bound East	: Romantic in mystical sense.
	: Long Voyage	: Suffering of the innocent.
	: Home	:
	: The Straw	: Subtlety of inner passion;
	:	: desire for mutual expression.
	: In the Zone	: Living in mere ideas.
	: The Fountain	: Love and youth are infinite.

From this chart we may conclude that O'Neill has a touch of every "school" of thought, if we view the characters separately. However he shows a predominant note of expressionism tempered with naturalism--when the characters are viewed as a whole, and when the artist is seen clearly. When we say that his position is predominantly expressionistic we mean that he is constantly seeking to articulate life in its struggles and conflicts. These are to express the potential qualities and powers of life. A person may be lured or deluded by desires--for wealth, to overcome fear, for the expression of mother love, for creative experience, or for freedom, but it is the expression of the inward state that brings about these clashes and conflicts, the joys and sorrows, peace and

pain of life. Thisⁱ tempered by naturalism because O'Neill vaguely starts with a naturalistic interpretation of life, chiefly biological. It is an evolutionary naturalism in that life originates from the same simple "cell" and develops orthogenetically. It is ruled by the laws of nature, which are at once kind and unkind, secure and precarious.

Chapter II

O'NEILL'S CONCEPTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Introduction.

"A good play is always a kind of parable in which individuals acting out their destiny illustrate the great laws and energies of life."¹ Drama is selective in that every drama may have distinct emphases. The emphasis may be laid on the reality of particular given events, on the invincible laws of nature, or on the inner power of the individual. But it is synoptic in that it shows universals of experience, emotional, volitional, and intellectual factors as a whole. The artificial stage is a limitation to space, yet through the imagination of the writer and of the audience, a drama illustrates a transcendence of space. All kinds of environments, natural and social, may be represented there. In like manner the stage may telescope time. The elapse of time in drama is itself a manifestation of human experience, in that it involves the art of forgetting the insignificant occurrences of life. But to interpret experience truly, the whole of experience must be indicated so that we may see how the past influences the present.

But however important environment may be, personages are the matter of supreme interest to drama. Humanism, or special interest in the weal and woe of man, then, is highly essential to drama, for it reproduces the clash between men and between men and natural forces. In

the description of this clash, we find schools of opinion, attitudes toward life, just as is true in philosophies. The realists engage themselves in depicting common experience as samples of real elements of life. The naturalists' interest is primarily in the continuity of the biological, psychological, and even the cosmological aspects of life. The realists and the naturalists are both interested in specific values. The romanticists place much emphasis upon feeling and self-expression. Their interest is more in the ultimate values.

We believe it is safe to say that the following three presuppositions are common to both philosophy and drama, for they both interpret experience. These are man, society, and nature. Professor John Dewey constantly refers to philosophy as being inherently a criticism: a comment on life. So it is with drama. This does not necessitate didactic drama. However, the articulation of life is itself a comment on life. Every statement given out from man implies judgment and all philosophy² in a sense, is a branch of morals, says Dewey. "True drama...requires in the background a scale of ethical values, or what amounts to the same thing, a sense of what³ is normal and representative and decorous..."

We have seen in our first chapter that O'Neill is chiefly interested in the "tensional situations" of life for they afford chances to detect the power of the individual and of his environment. Now, let us examine his

conception of the individual more analytically.

A. The Individual as a Being of Activity.

Activity is inherent in life and has always been so, but the notion of interaction, both in its specific sense (body-mind relation) and in its general sense (intercourse between elements of experience or life) is a modern conception, and has become prominent in modern thought. Our use of the term will be with the general sense; for example, the thinking process is an interaction between the thinker and the object. The activity of the individual, then, manifests itself in interaction with himself (reflective experience); with others (social), and with nature. O'Neill, like any other artist or interpreter of life, is conscious of this activity.

1. Activity in the form of mental struggles.

Mental struggle is as old as humanity itself. Every struggle shows an imperative demand for the release of energy. As soon as it is released, the demand for its focalization arises. But the final aim seems to be to find a state of tranquility. The articulation of these processes is art. Let us see how O'Neill portrays activity of man.

O'Neill makes good use of soliloquy to show the inner struggle. The Emperor Jones may be said to be almost one long soliloquy. Soliloquy also runs through Strange Interlude. In this play mental confusion colors the entire play. An example; Darrell, the doctor, confronted

by Nina's situation upon the loss of her child, says, "Nina, I don't know what to think." "You must know what to think", Nina replies. "I can't think it out myself any more....I've thought and thought about it....I can't quite convince something in me that's afraid of something. I need the courage of some one who can stand outside and reason it out as if Sam and I were no more than guinea pigs....You've got to show me what's the sane...the truly sane, you understand!....thing I must do for Sam's sake, and my own."⁴

Then in Lazarus Laughed, we find Caligula who tries to forget struggles and asks, "What good is wine if it cannot kill thought?"⁵ On the other hand, Lazarus, has overcome the veil of fear after a long struggle. This victorious figure serves as an ideal of challenge. He is not perfectly understood, therefore is often hated. Men at once seek after ideals and hate them. As Walter Pater says of Botticelli's "pevish-looking Madonnas"...."Her trouble is in the very caress of the mysterious child, whose gaze is always far from her, and who has already that sweet look of devotion which men have never been able altogether to love and which makes the born saint an object of suspicion to his earthly brethern."⁶

In the Hairy Ape, Yank is always "trying to tink". After he was arrested, he was told by the judge to think it over. "Toity days to tink it over." "Tink it over! Christ, dat's all I been doin' for weeks!"⁷ Yank

through struggle had lifted himself out of the old situation; and could not return to it. To interpret this character simply, Yank transcends the animal world by obtaining the power of thought (thinking) and creation (acting)—characteristics of humanity. Then he became conscious of these powers, and came to conflict with similar beings.

In Dynamo O'Neill tries to show the struggle between the inevitable going-out of old beliefs and their inadequate substitutes of the modern world. The struggle is one between consoling paternal religion and self-asserting humanism. It is a struggle of choice. This manifests Hegel's dialectic interpretation of art,—the thesis of the subjective (release of energy) over against the objective (focalization) and the demand of a synthesis of the absolute (a state of tranquility). Here is the art of O'Neill, aiming at the release of energy, its focalization, and its final tranquilization.

2. Struggle for compensation and consolation.

To be a "man dissatisfied" is better than to be "a pig satisfied", yet to seek after satisfaction is one of the activities of man. Satisfaction may be of many forms, but here we mean the state of "equilibrium" in life. Man finds great compensation in arriving at a state of equilibrium. One of the ways of arriving at this state is the solving of problems.

In Straw, Stephen Murray was uneasy and at a loss with himself. "I am sore at everything because

I'm dissatisfied with my own cussedness and laziness....
 and I want to pass the buck." But immediately he takes
 courage and says, "I'll come out of it all right and get
 down to brass tacks again." By this determination, he
 sees the solution of the problem--that he has to take
 action. Then when he acts upon the challenge of Miss Gilman
 there comes a moment of illumination and he exclaims, "Oh,
 how can I explain what has happened? I suddenly saw---how
 beautiful and sweet and good she is---how I couldn't bear
 the thought of life without her---That's all." Then
 "determinedly", "She must marry me at once and I'll take
 her away."

In Desire under the Elms, we find human
 struggle in the form of desires. Abbie's desire is at
 first for the farm from the old man whom she has married,
 but it finally turns to love for Eben, her step-son. Eben
 at first desires nothing but to avenge his own mother on
 his father whose hard ways had killed her. But this strong
 desire is supplanted by a stronger--love for Abbie. When
 these two unite, they confront the problem of mutual
 understanding: Abbie, to prove her love for Eben, smothers
 their child; Eben proves his love for her by willingly
 giving himself up to the law with her. In this play some
 particulars may seem far-fetched, but the process of
 releasing energy, of focalizing it, and of reaching a
 consummation, is well articulated.

In Lazarus Laughed we have a rare example
 in O'Neill of the supreme consummation of mental struggle

in man. When the veil of ignorance and fear is taken away he finds meaning and value in the activity of struggle, and he reaches out for it. O'Neill does not often see rich fulfilment, but he has no patience with passivity, even where struggle is eventually hopeless.

3. Struggle for a better self.

Here we see man mentally weighing the situation and at times exercising that divine element in himself of control. His imagination is disciplined to discern reality, and to treasure what is found to be true. To prefer the better requires restraint and sacrifice, and these in turn give rise to "tensional situations". O'Neill often makes use of this.

Caleb Williams in Diff'rent without ado about it, resolves to prove himself by a long period of sacrifice for Emma, who has rejected him for a false ideal. Caleb's statement well illustrates the power of rational control: "You got queer, strict notions, Emma. A man'll never live up to 'em--with never one slip. But you got to act accordin' to your lights, I expect. It sort o' busts everythin' to bits for me--But o'course, if you ain't willin' to take me the way I be, there's nothin to do. And whatever you think is best, suits me."¹²

The ways of exercising self restraint are are different among different peoples though the fundamental volitional power is the same. The Occident excels in adventurous pursuits; the Orient in calm security. For example, in Marco Millions, Marco represents the former in

his persistence after wealth; while Chu Yin, the court philosopher of Kublai Khan, shows the quiet restraint of the East. The control of the former is expressive; that of the latter repressive. Again in The Fountain we see these two characteristic ways of control. The Spaniards "would sack heaven and melt the moon for silver," while Juan would risk all for the "forever blooming flower of love." On the other hand, Nano, the Indian, proves the Confucian saying that "the general commanding thirty thousand soldiers may be captured, but the will of a determined individual cannot be overcome." He conquers by calm security.

4. Battling fate.

Here we see O'Neill's interest in naturalistic philosophy, in the belief of biological and psychological determinism, on one hand, and chance on the other. "The Greek Hero struggles with the superhuman; the Elizabethan¹³ struggles with himself; the modern hero with the world." This battling with the world calls forth much sympathy from O'Neill for his individuals. "His eye has been largely on the side of the world's injustice....as against the shams¹⁴ and social inequalities of the limited life he has seen..."

Those who live with their eyes^{open} at all, notice the tragedy of heritage, especially the physical and the mental. There may be a law of compensation in nature, yet the striving to overcome defects and the striving to endure the harshness of circumstances are among the chief traits of life.

In Beyond the Horizon, it is because Robert Mayo had been born a weakling that he succumbs to particular circumstances, rather than overcoming them. Following a natural weak tendency, he married and stayed at home on the farm though a higher ideal called. Let us examine more closely how O'Neill portrays this character. We find in Act Two, Scene One, a good description of Robert's home after his degeneration has begun: "soiled curtains", "a patched screen door", "little significant details...evidence of of carelessness, of inefficiency, of an industry gone to seed."¹⁵ Robert, neglecting his immediate work on the farm at home, goes on dreaming and craving the life of freedom--"the beyond". Andrew, his brother, having the chance to go to the "beyond" places, finds nothing there but "dirty holes", "blistering seas", and "rotten jobs".¹⁶ The one cannot live without illusion; the other loses almost everything through temptation for gain. In judgment they see their natural limitation and Robert says, "I am a failure, Ruth another---but we can justly lay some of the blame for our stumbling on God."¹⁷ There is more than sheer pessimism or fatalism here; the modern idea of a "finite God" is implied. This conception is an attempt to interpret the problem of evil, especially natural evil, the destruction of persons and values.

"Fate" is a slippery and many-sided word. We hope to make it somewhat clear by illustrations. In The First Man we find that Martha demands an expression of

the mother instinct, while Curt demands the realization of his scientific search or ideal. They both are "intelligent" and understand each other, except in this one thing of how both these ideals may be realized without infringing upon each other. Though this play seems more concerned with the battling of ideals, there is the natural limitation of the aspiration of the woman and the man. To fulfill the former means the destruction of the work of the man and at the same time the death of the woman, but to fulfill the ideal of the man means the destruction of the happiness of the woman and a break in the love bond between them. Clark sees the deep meaning of this play when he says, "The idea of the play is almost formulaic: A man whose dreams are ruined---or so he believes---pulled back to earth by the facts of life; at last given a new impetus." ¹⁸ This expresses the modern tendency, "struggles with the world." We may repeat again that it is the naturalistic trend of thought of our age that an ultimate separation of ideals from "facts of life on earth" must be denied. Whatever way we may look at this, the given situation is not to be neglected.

We have seen thus far the physical and intellectual heritage, where struggles ensue. They have their bases in life and they have their occasions for destruction. But life is a struggle or a challenge, and the issue lies in what the victims are to make out of the bonds and the loopholes. O'Neill, as we have pointed out

in our introduction, is interested in the universal elements of life. All God's Chillun Got Wings goes deeper than Marco Millions in portraying the racial heritage and interracial problems, arising from their heritage. O'Neill shows his genius and his personality in this play because he "took his situation from life as he found it...." ¹⁹ He interprets the basic facts rather than the social prejudices. A true philosopher as well as a true artist must deal with life by what it is and what it ought to be not by what it seems to some. "In a purely dispassionate manner ", he articulates "the overtones and subtle suggestions of race memory and fear and hatred." The contracting parties of the white and the black precipitate struggles on account of their heritage on the one hand and social injustice (racial prejudice and hatred) on the other, but the play, as Clark points out, is "thrillingly human" and "essential-²⁰ly.....a drama of love and passion."

The "finite God" idea is again manifested here in All God's Chillun in Jim's speech:

"Maybe He can forgive what you've done to me: and maybe He can forgive what I've done to you: but I don't see how He's going to forgive----Himself."

Jim makes this assertion, but he is not intellectually strong enough to hold to what he has said, and perhaps he did not even understand what he was saying, except that it was an unjust situation which forced him to this "blasphemy". In looking over the "anonymous letters"

and the "newspaper bricks" hurled at O'Neill after the appearance of this play, one is convinced that O'Neill is actually taking part in the drama of life. There is a clash between the ideas of the interpreter or artist, and the audience.

B. The Individual as a Being of Ideals.

Duality seems to be one of the chief characteristics of life---from the simple duality of "the here and the there", "the now and the then" to the complex of "the idea and the ideal", "the is and the ought to be". One of the human traits is its forwardness of looking; in other words, man is an animal of ideals. To formulate ideals, that is, to project ideas, is intelligence.

If every ideal and every act is formulated and carried out in view of its connections, it is consequently realizable, and it is true. Those ideals which bear not only instrumental significance but also intrinsic interest may be called ideals, but the irrelevant, the isolated, and the blind fancies are illusions. In life there is residue of merely necessary actions. Some philosophers call ideals the coherent, and fancies, the incoherent. Traditionally these dualities are regarded as ultimate. But modern thought holds that ideals and illusions are equally "real" for they are elements of experience. O'Neill adheres to the latter view, for he portrays both of these as factors in human life. Furthermore, he is specially interested in the almost "abnormal", i.e., in the extreme cases of

intensified situations.

To be capable of formulating and realizing ideals implies freedom. Man is at once free and bound. He is free because he can choose, and can project many possibilities. He is bound by the laws of nature, especially by the law of reason. Habits and institutions are human creations; in turn, human beings are restricted more or less by them; hence the inwardness of man often conflicts with his outward manifestations and struggle seems to be in the very nature of things. "Man's peculiar blindness arises from the fact that he does not wish to be limited in his dominant desire,...He wishes to be free to pursue his folly, as Erasmus would say, and finally discovers the limits established in the nature of things by the somewhat painful process of colliding with them."²¹

This process is real in that it comprises the release of energy (activity and imminent collision), its focalization (specific problematic situations and projected ideals), and its consummation (terminal equilibrium). Let us examine O'Neill's portrayal of this process in his characters.

1. Material objects as ideals.

Man is born in need. From this normal situation the acquisitive sense develops, and we find men "sacking heaven and melting the moon for silver," (Cf. The Fountain) and going out "to get a million", (Cf. Marco Millions). From the normal need of the sexes for

each other develops the desperate desire to possess the person of another. In Welded we have an extreme example of this desire, but here the object includes even the entire being. Cape wants the woman he loves to lose her personality in oneness with him. Nina, in Strange Interlude seems to be a symbol of the possessive desire as it is to be found in womankind in general. She is insatiable: ✓

2. "Air-castles" as ideals.

The law of true ideals is two-fold: the ideal must be reasonable, (related to many aspects of life), and it must be the best the individual is capable of creating (true to life and connected with reality). But there are other ideals. These are the incoherent creations of men, ideals which have no bearing on the main stream of life. Isolated thus, they become sheer impossibilities, or mere fancy.

Ile is built on this type of ideal. Home, the welfare of the wife he loves, his own comfort and relations with his men--all these the captain of a whale-vessel ignores for the fancy of a mere idea. He wishes to return to port with his vessel filled with whale-oil, because he has always done so. That conditions of this particular voyage make that unreasonable he will not consider. He does not need the money which will result from the trip, and he does not care for the money. He is in love with an idea so isolated from his other relationships with life, that the result is the loss of infinitely

higher values.

Again, in Gold the man Bartlett pins his faith, in spite of evidence and reason, to paste treasure, He loses his sanity and everything in life on a false ideal.

3. Creative experience as ideals.

Here we come to a favorite theme in O'Neill. His own life has been one of struggle for fulfilment of of this ideal. In looking at the modern world he sees the abnormal acquisitive impulse in such an ascendancy over the expression of this higher desire in man that he sometimes becomes satirical in his treatment. (Cf. Marco Millions, The Fountain, The Hairy Ape and Strange Interlude).

The desire to create is fundamental to his play, The First Man, Curtis Jayson has the creative imagination to find "the first man",---"a whole new world of knowledge may be opened up, the very origin of Man himself!"²² Martha, his wife, shares his idea, but feels she has her own unique part in the work of creation. Describing her need, she tells of a night along the Tibetan border when she remembered a tribeswoman she had once seen. "She was nursing her child. Her eyes were curiously sure of herself. She was horribly ugly....and yet!---I appeared to myself the ugly one while she was beautiful."²³

4. Freedom as ideals.

Imagination, anticipation, and volition distinguish man as of a higher order. All these "faculties" imply and afford freedom. This power is fundamental to the

formulation and realization of ideals. Freedom is itself one of the highest ideals, but the scale of freedom is various since there is both positive and negative freedom.

There are those who want freedom from natural environment. Robert Mayo in Beyond aspired to freedom from the farm and the confining hills. In Anna Christie, Anna hates the land while old Chris, her father, hates "that ole daval sea." Others chafe under social ties. Ruth in Beyond and Nina in Strange Interlude illustrate this. Then there is the attempt to escape mental bondage; from thought (Yank in Moon of the Caribbees), from fear (the "emperor" in Emperor Jones), from losing one's personality, even to a high ideal (Martha in The First Man).

O'Neill's position on freedom as a whole again indicates naturalism in that moral activities depend upon particular events, rather than upon the command of ideals. But he does show that freedom is actualized by the power of will and intelligence.

C. Individual as a Being of Egoism and Altruism.

Egoism may be said to have two faces. Its true face is humanism; the false one is egotism, or sheer selfishness. The logical development of right individualism is altruism. This is the spirit of the Kan⁺ian maxim: "Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law." There are many theories concerning the priority of egoism and altruism,

but no one denies that they are both in man and that they are inseparable. Egoism without altruism becomes egotism or conceit; altruism without egoism, sentimentalism.

The subjective and the objective are seemingly antithetical, but if we examine their underlying principle we find that they are one continuous growth of life. Every statement or judgment has a social implication. If we say this thing is good, and others are in the same position and have the same endowments, they will say we speak the truth. We may, however, correct each other. When one asserts that he should be treated justly, he implies that everybody else should be so treated if he wishes to make his assertion valid.

Babbitt distinguishes "humanism" from "humanitarianism" thus: the former is a nice balance of selection and sympathy while the latter is overloaded with social and paternal enthusiasm. O'Neill sees in modern man an obsession with his own self. He says, "Yet it is only by means of some form of supernaturalism that we may express in the theater what we comprehend intuitively of that self-obsession which is the particular discount we
24
moderns pay for the loan of life." O'Neill himself, then, is at least partially a humanist in that he is satirical as regards egotistical modern man. But when his sympathies rule, he is more of a humanitarian.

Let us examine a few of O'Neill's characters. In Matt Burke in Anna Christie we have a picture of

egotism. He is a sentimental Irishman, whose bubble bursts when he discovers Anna Christie has been, once upon a time, in a house of prostitution. Though Mat had visited port cities, and could profess no reform, Anna had "wronged him". She had been reclaimed from her old life by life on the sea, enough to convince Mat that she was a true woman. But when her confession came he did not even think of his own state of morals. She had "wronged" him.

Nina Leed's (in Strange Interlude) latent egoism of tenderness for Evans' welfare appears in a strange form. She is the philanthropist----sentimentally careful of him. Evans himself would have hated her care, could he have known the means she used.. What man would not?²⁵

O'Neill is conscious of the price modern man pays for his egotism, yet he has shown throughout his plays great sympathy for man in his individual pursuits. ✓

D. Summary.

O'Neill's descriptions of the individual give diverse articulations as we have analyzed them. But he seems through his realism to have a pessimistic slant, in that he vividly and tragically describes the crushing of ideals and desires. In spite of this he seems to bring out values from suffering for life to him; in its very nature is activity. In his conception of the individual we find a clash between naturalism and expressionism. Naturalism shows its force in natural laws and in biological and psychological determinations, while expressionism

manifests itself in the creativity of thought, judgment, formulation of ideals, in experiences. From the foregoing he seems to subordinate naturalism to expressionism. His position is naturalistic when he emphasizes the inseparability of life from nature.

Chapter III

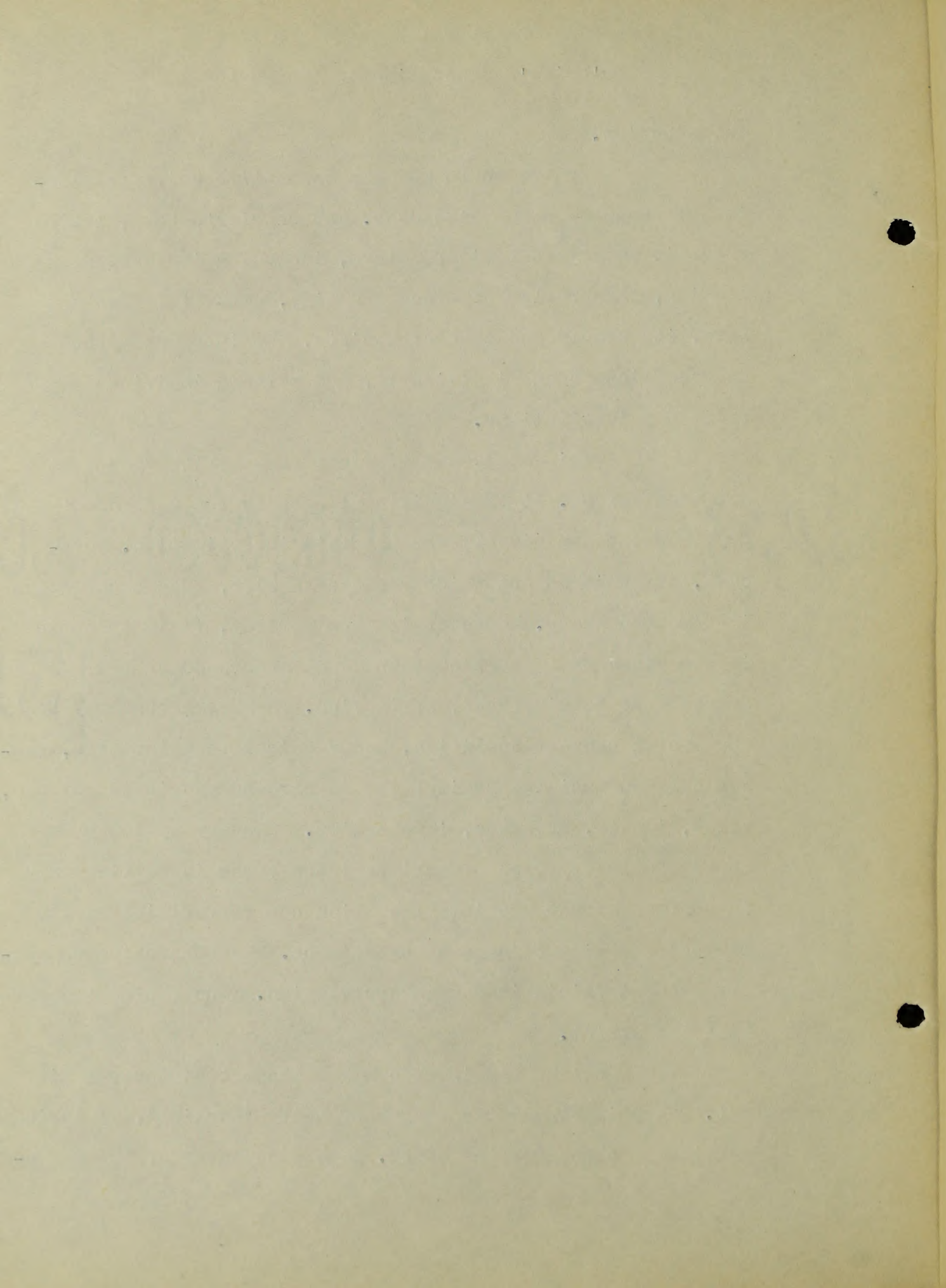
O'Neill's Conception of the World

Introduction.

By the world we mean the entire universe within the range of human discourse. For clarity's sake, let us treat it under two topics: Nature, including its general meaning, the problem of space and time, natural forces and laws, its beauty and change; Society, the interdependence and conflicts among individuals, and between individuals and their own institutions.

This study may at first seem arbitrary but it is not meaningless. It is significant because the work of O'Neill may show the man himself through this investigation. Moreover, drama is an art which represents life, though selective in time and space. Whatever it does portray, it is synoptic in the sense that the background and foreground of the selected events must be displayed, or implied. The background may be the social conventionalities, geographical peculiarities, biological and racial heredity; the foreground may imply purpose, value, ideals, progress, immortality. Can any system be said to be absolutely free of arbitrariness? The issue lies only in whether or not the interpretation can be verified by the largest and widest range of experience. The subjective character seems implicit in any interpretation. Thus behind the art lies the artist.

Let us see if we can see the artist through his art. There is always the danger of being "partial", of taking particular cases for the whole. Some procedures of the drama-



tist are of necessity of logic, rather than of the limitation and prejudice of the artist. However, the "main" tendency, as a whole, will more or less express the "person behind". The pessimism of Schopenhauer and Hardy, the optimism of Meredith and Leibniz illustrate this point.

A. Nature.

Everything is part of nature, yet the duality of subject-object, as we have just seen, seems implicit in the nature of things. This is not to be an exposition of any philosophy of knowledge or of nature, but a brief analysis of some of the problems of nature in the art of O'Neill may help us to understand him better.

1. Time and space.

Time and space are as old as the human race. Spatially there is "the here" and "the there"; temporally, "the now" and "the then". In these modern times time has become more crucial than space. Temporal order is the rhythm of the world. From the slower and the more regular we have structure; from the more rapid and irregular we have process, but these are two aspects of life. Through memory, imagination, intellectual construction one may penetrate time and space. Time and space are essential in the portrayal of life for events must occur "somewhere" at "some time".

O'Neill's contribution lies in the trust of human imagination where a long elapse of time may be grasped and demanded by the audience. For example, in Diff'rent thirty years were necessary to show the full accomplishment of a perverse notion--and Caleb, who had hoped long, suddenly dis-

illusioned went out and hanged himself. The drama ends with abrupt tragedy, but the audience is prepared. In Straw the passage of time covers but eight months, but here the ravages of disease and despair are in a race with time. Has disease won ? Murray says there is always hope. Eileen's "straw" is her look into time when she can from "now on" watch over and care for him. We see Nina, in Strange Interlude with hair gray, and heart quiet but weary, after twenty-five stormy years. A "strange interlude" for her !

Time is also shown to be at once a means of forgetting sorrows and of healing wounds; a means of achieving desired ends. Robert Mayo (in Beyond) went up to the hill-top again where eight years before he had given up his visions of what lay beyond the horizons, for the love of a girl. After eight years of disappointment and failure, he came again to the old vision, where, released from his old bondage, he found consolation. Only time could carry the eventful character of life.

Space is supposedly a stage within whose boundary events take place. O'Neill's interpretation has no speculative formulation. In the first place, we find in his description that there is a struggle among men for freedom of space. They crave a wider, a more desirable place in which to live. Though a weakling, Robert Mayo is possessed by a vision of "the beauty of the far off...the freedom of the great wide spaces..."¹ He says, "What I want to do now is to keep on moving so that I won't take root in any one place."² The wanderlust spirit is

one of the expressions of enlarging spatial environment. But there is a great deal in the speech of his brother, Andrew--though according to O'Neill's portrayal of this man he did not realize the wisdom of his own words. He says to Robert, "Then you might as well stay here, because we've got all you're looking for right on this farm. There's wide enough space, Lord knows; and you can have all the sea you want by walking a mile down to the beach; and there's plenty of horizon to look at, and beauty enough for anyone..."³ The fact of the boundless possibilities of space in imagination, in intellect--art and knowledge--is often neglected. The depth and the width of life cannot be fathomed by mere "wide" spaces.

2. Kind or unkind.

Bosanquet says, "Nature means that province of beauty in which every man is his own artist."⁴ As soon as we discuss whether nature is kind or unkind, we enter a subjective view of nature, for human values are inevitable in both philosophical and artistic interpretations.

Nature at once inspires and hinders life. Anna lives a different life when she sees the vastness and the purifying power of the sea, while old Chris blames all his wickedness on the influence of "dat ole daval sea". (Cf. Anna Christie) The barrenness of seas of ice drives Captain Keeney's wife to madness. (Cf. Ile) Robert Mayo sees beauty only in the wide spaces, while his brother believes a suitable

environment may be had near at hand. (Cf. Beyond) The objective beauty of nature may inspire; the subjective sense may re-create the situation. It is only when persons take a partial view of the relation between nature and man that the clash comes. The naturalistic artists are right in that they emphasize the continuity of the natural and the spiritual, for nature is at once the root and the product of experience, and the order of nature is the order of art. O'Neill's blending of naturalism and expressionism is truly a modern tendency. William James says that though nature is a boundary to man, its "outlines" may be "softened" through religious and creative experiences.⁵ Man then, is his own artist in nature. How and what he chooses to mold in the given situation is a moral issue. O'Neill's recent work, Dynamo, well illustrates the modern struggle: the old "ultimate teleology" has lost its charm, yet the new "opportunism" has not proved itself capable of meeting human needs.

Nature according to O'Neill, is both kind and unkind. As to a systematic interpretation of natural forces, he does not give one, but a comparison of Schopenhauer's position with his, in brief formula, may serve to indicate his position: Schopenhauer--"All living is striving, all striving is suffering, therefore all living is suffering."⁶ O'Neill--"All living is striving, all striving is uncertain (in consequences), therefore all living is uncertain.

B. Society.

1. Interdependence of individuals.

Vague though he may be at times in his attempts at philosophical thinking, O'Neill does metaphorically show the relations of individuals. Individuals were of the same "cell" in the beginning. Centers of experience began to form in the divided parts of the cell. This cosmology is quite similar to that of the Chinese. Tai-Chi, the Great Ultimate, manifests itself in two principles, Yin and Yang, potentiality and actuality respectively.⁷ These constitute the principles of creation. They are inseparable. O'Neill's constant reference to the "passion for unity", to use William James' terminology, is to express the interdependence of individuals. For example, when Cape and Eleanor, in Welded, were separated each was "lonely". He not only shows the social nature of existence between the sexes, but also the need for companionship and co-operation between men.

In Beyond the love between Robert and Andrew is shown to be more dependable and lasting than that between the men and the woman, Ruth. In Bound East for Cardiff there is the rough but true picture of a dying man and his "pal". Indeed, we may say O'Neill is masculine in nearly all of his interpretations. In this he undoubtedly was influenced by Strindberg.

Eileen Carmody, to be sure, is truly feminine in her need to "mother" those around her, and her balance of selection and sympathy is as good as can be found in O'Neill anywhere.

2. Conflicts among individuals.

We have seen "the passion for unity"--interdependence of individuals. Now we are ready to see the passion for "distinctness", or conflicts among individuals. The former is the very foundation of altruism; while the latter is equivalent to egoism or individualism.

O'Neill seems to show the passion for distinctness among individuals in three major fields: in material wealth, in heritage, and in ideals. It is not necessary to repeat our discussion on the struggles of the individual. We shall only point out some of O'Neill's plays built upon these conflicts. In Desire Under the Elms, we find a crude display of land greed. In Marco Millions, The Fountain, The Rope, and Gold, we see men scrambling for wealth. Then in Emperor Jones, All God's Chillun, Dreamy Kid, and Marco Millions the conflict between individuals through racial heritage is evident. But after all, the most frequent and crucial conflicts are those of ideals. The First Man, Diff'rent, Lazarus Laughed, Anna Christie, Marco Millions, and the Great God Brown are the most outstanding plays of this type, but this conflict can be found in most of the others also.

3. Society as subordinate to the individual.

The social is in the very nature of life. We have a common bond of time and space for our "here-now" is a component of the one space-time of this common world. Subjectively, we are also bound together. This is by the common endowments of man. Society is a collective term for

the whole of humanity and its institutions. These institutions may limit man but they are a means of conserving values for him. As soon as they cease to do this, new institutions are in demand. Society serves and influences man but it is instrumental to him, for he is a free agent and moral law is "autonomous". Cape initiated love for Eleanor, (Welded), and a home for her, but Eleanor was also a being of initiation, not his creation. Conflicts came when mutual respect was impaired. The first attempt at solution was to run away from his own institution. The "street woman" might afford him an absolute freedom, but he deliberately returned home. This shows pluralism--each individual a center of experience. The street woman herself, socially was dominated by her institution and by the cruelty of her husband, but her spirit shown to Cape shows the subordination of society to the individual, for she refused to sell herself out completely.

C. Summary.

Strictly speaking, O'Neill cannot be said to have a philosophy of the world. He gives partial indications but he is by no means clear and systematic. Through his genius we may find striking contributions to dramatic art, but to have a sound philosophy requires years of experience and thought. He is "young" yet.

Time and space have their meanings only in relation to human affairs. Every part of nature, beautiful or ugly, kind or unkind, seems to have its place in the process of evolution. The part that man plays in the cosmic evolution is consciously appreciated by O'Neill for he says, "...I'm always,

always trying to interpret Life, in terms of lives, never just lives in terms of character. I'm always acutely conscious of the Force behind (Fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it--mystery, certainly)-- and of the one eternal tragedy of man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle to make the Force express him instead of being as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in the expression, and my profound conviction is that this is the only subject worth writing about and that it is possible--or can be-- to develop a tragic expression in terms of transfigured modern values and symbols in the theater, which may to some degree bring home to members of a modern audience their ennobling identity with the tragic figures on the stage."

O'Neill is quite in line with the modern tendency of thought, namely, pluralism. Morally, specific values are more emphasized. As regards being, the individuals are distinct ^ccenters of experience... They may abide by the same natural laws and the laws of reason, but each is significant in that it is of unique worth, capable of projecting ideals.

As to O'Neill's attitude toward society, he expresses the modern tendency--skepticism. He sees that society with its conventionality is used as a place for the conservation of values, but when new needs and new demands come in, new attitudes and new creations arise. In every generation we see the struggle of the old and the new; O'Neill often portrays a new "Hypatia" questioning the old order.

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Chapter IV

General Conclusion: O'Neill's Experience, Individuality, Work and Interpretation of Life.

To be born well is a good thing but the plasticity of life is quite as important. The tendency of the former may influence the entire course of human activities; however, experience acquires new character and power by the education of native capacities. In other words, "the hour makes the man and the man makes the hour." O'Neill began with a good heritage in his Celtic ancestry and he grew up in the theater. Then came his experience with the "magnitudes of life". This experience is reflected in his wide range of setting and characters. His association with the "lower strata" of society afforded him first-hand knowledge of dialects, emotions and actual struggles of people of various races. His own blood and imagination plus his experience make him the interpreter of the man he knows, in his primitive and fundamental passions.

Genius may often be traced by the interest of a person, for the latter is the inner potential tendency. The interest may come to prominence gradually, or suddenly. With O'Neill it came suddenly, but the suddenness was rather an outburst of years of stored-up experience. He saw it and seized the opportunity when the challenging time of his illness came. It was as if the escaping of his energy, little by little, for so long a time, had not permitted him to see the great force of it if it could be directed through one channel. These six

months acted as a reservoir. The year following marked the beginning of a definite career, that of a playwright.

O'Neill's innermost spirit is close to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in that he believes a worthwhile life is one of struggle. One must will to live and will to power. Henry James expresses O'Neill's spirit when he says, "For myself I live, live intensely and I am fed by life, and my value, whatever it be, is in my own kind of expression of that."¹ In Marco Millions we can almost hear O'Neill himself speaking to the little princess, "Strive after what your heart desires! Who can ever know which are the mistakes we make? One should be either sad or joyful. Contentment is a warm sty for the eaters and sleepers!"² This is in accordance with his individualistic and expressionistic position as we have seen it in his description of the individual.

We have said that we find realistic, naturalistic and romantic or expressionistic elements in his work, and that his naturalism is the body, while expressionism is the soul. We say again that this is the modern tendency of thought: neither mechanism nor spiritualism alone expresses the reality of life.

Stark Young criticizes O'Neill for his partial articulation of life. He says, "In great drama there is a distribution of elements, a balancing of things with a more complete view of the world and all that is in it."³ It is true that life is more complex than O'Neill portrays, but to

expect a comprehensive interpretation of life in drama is exacting. Dramatic art and philosophy have close relations, but their technique and their objectives are different. Fundamentally drama is selective, while philosophy is synoptic.

Joseph Shipley says that O'Neill is excellent in analysis but fails in synthesis. The modern realistic and pluralistic tendency of thought, supported by the scientific method of analysis finds intrinsic worth in each concrete particular situation. O'Neill is one of the representatives of this tendency. Eucken is right when he says, "In American life, a robust realism is a concomitant of this idealism (idealism of conviction) which joins religion and democracy in close union with actual life."⁴ O'Neill therefore does not so much fail in a synthesis as a critic may think, for every individual with his particular situation "mirrors the whole universe."

One of O'Neill's unique characteristics in his interpretation of life is seen in the following: "His eye has been largely on the side of the world's injustice, on the side of the underdog, as against the shams and social inequalities of the limited life he has seen...he has gone down into the depths of a personal bitterness, which is felt in all of his plays--a bitterness with a relentless negation, which has its romantic sides."⁵ This comprises his humanitarian attitude. It undoubtedly reflects, in large measure, the influence of Strindberg, who looked upon life even in his softest mood as the conflict between the pain of enjoyment and the

pleasure of suffering; between the pangs of the penitent⁶ and the joys of the prodigal.

In conclusion then, O'Neill is a product of his heritage, his experience and his time. He is the foremost American dramatist today. Basically his work contains realism, naturalism and romanticism. His intimate knowledge of the common struggles of life among men affords him true content for his art.. His temperament and his experience make him a humanitarian (having more sympathy than selection), while the modern evolutionary naturalism supports his humanistic (concerned with human ends and values) and skeptical attitude toward the goal of life (traditional teleology). Man is at once free and responsible. He has to live and he desires to live fully; therefore he is to strive though there is no sure way to the ultimate goal.

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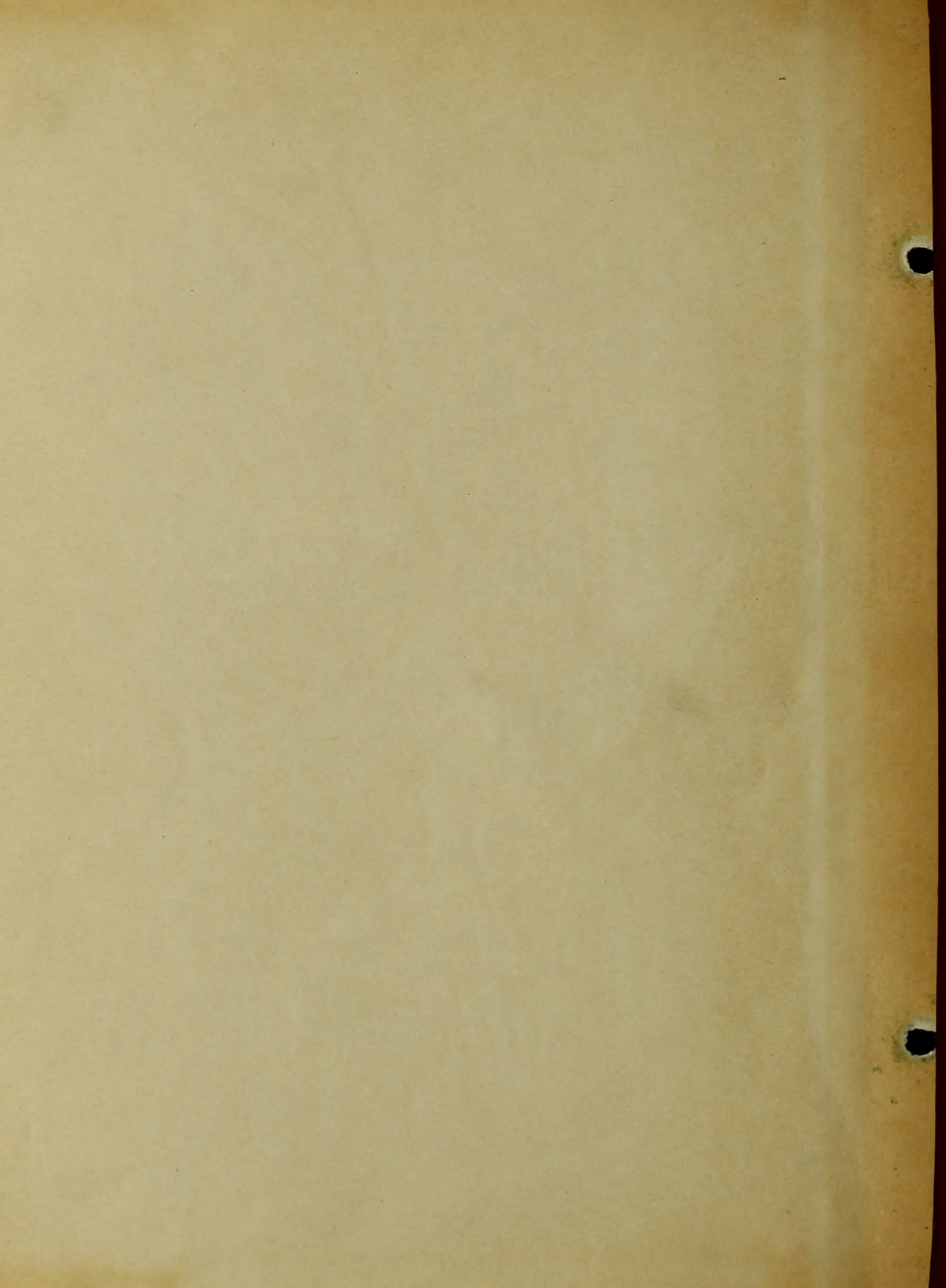
III. General

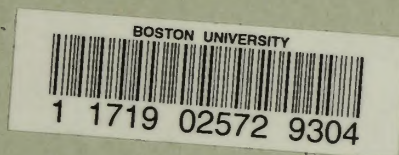
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Note: I have read in entirety all the books and articles listed in the bibliography, with the exception of those starred, in which case I confined myself to the chapters bearing on my thesis.

One exception must be made with the works of O'Neill in Dynamo. I sent to the publishers for a copy, but it was not yet off the press. I read all the reviews I could find.





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